utilization, production of sugar, bagasse based power generation, production of ethanol etc. wherever applicable, which will duly contribute towards the GDP of the country.

Hanging over FCI operations to private companies

331. SHRIMATI BRINDA KARAT: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any policy to hand over certain operations of FCI to private companies; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) and (b) There is presently no proposal to outsource any of the core activities of the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to the private sector. However, activities such as sweeping, cleaning, dusting and watching operations stand outsourced. In addition, the Civil Engineering, Maintenance works and Electrical Maintenance works of certain depots have also been outsourced. In States and areas such as J&K and the North East, engineering construction works are also being outsourced to other agencies, as the FCI does not have the required infrastructure for the same.

Amending Essential Commodities Act

332. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO:
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering sweeping changes in the Essential Commodities Act (ECA), 1955 to bring it in consonance with the liberalized economic environment;

(b) if so, whether some of the changes proposed are restricting ECA to specific sectors like drugs, edible oils, petroleum products, seeds of food crops, wheat, paddy, rice, sugar and sugarcane;

(c) whether there is also a move to empower the Central Government to add or remove any essential commodity from the list also to amend schedules in other ways; and

(d) if so, by what time, a final decision in regard to amending ECA is likely to be taken and the main amendments that are likely to be considered?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) to (c) The provisions of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and the list of the essential commodities are being reviewed on the basis of their relevance in the context of liberalization and the need for dismantling of unnecessary or irrelevant restrictions on movement and distribution of essential commodities, particularly of agricultural commodities, across the country. After consultation with the concerned Ministries, it is proposed to amend the Act.

(d) A Bill to amend the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 will be introduced in the Parliament as and when a formal decision is taken in this regard at the appropriate level.

Monitoring food supplies

333. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are monitoring the food supplies being distributed under the Targeted Public Distribution System through Fair Price Shops in the country;

(b) if so, the *modus operandi* thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) The Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) is operated under the joint responsibility of the Central and the State Governments. While the Central Government is responsible for procurement, shortage and transportation of foodgrains upto the nearest principle distribution center of FCI in each State/UT., the identification of